

## network

HUMANITIES

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Young Californians to play a central role in CCH's upcoming April campaign.

CCH project involving Native Americans influences historic decision to return land to Indian tribe.

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CCH-supported radio documentary explores the housing crisis on the Central Coast.

COMING  
IN APRILCALIFORNIA STORIES  
UNCOVEREDCCH'S NEW STATEWIDE  
STORY-SHARING CAMPAIGNYOUNG CALIFORNIANS AT THE  
FOREFRONT OF ACTIVITIES

Russian-speaking immigrant teens in West Hollywood explore their emerging cross-cultural identity in one of the Council's California Stories Uncovered projects. Top: Natalia Zotova, one of the project participants is shown here with her mother in a photo taken by another participant, 16-year-old Alexsey Donskoy. At right: A photo of a Russian couple at home taken by Belarus-born Daniel Korochkin-Zoryn, age 16. Photos courtesy of Venice Arts.



CALIFORNIA. IT'S THE MOST ETHNICALLY DIVERSE STATE IN THE NATION. A STATE WITH A MULTIPLICITY OF LANGUAGES AND CULTURES, WHERE THE OLD AND THE NEW ARE CONTINUALLY COLLIDING. Daily, we read and hear California's demographic facts: More than 25 percent born in another country; almost 40 percent speaking a language other than English at home. But what do these facts mean? What is it like to be a Californian at this time in history? And who are these people called Californians?

This April the Council will sponsor a statewide story-sharing campaign designed to encourage people to look beyond the state's statistics and stereotypes to the reality of California life. The new statewide campaign, called California Stories Uncovered, will involve people in hundreds of story-based activities in schools,

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SACRED LAND RETURNED  
TO WIYOT PEOPLE

Director of project documenting the lives of native elders plays key role

Some 144 years after a brutal massacre on a small island in Humboldt Bay decimated the Wiyot population, the city of Eureka took a small step toward righting this past wrong by returning a portion of the island to the Wiyot people. It marked the first time in California history that a city had returned a sacred site to its native people.

Indian Island is the center of the Wiyot universe, a sacred place

where for centuries the Wiyot held major celebrations and dances. There has been no dancing on Indian Island since the massacre. In accepting the deed to the land from the mayor of Eureka last May, Cheryl A. Seidner, chairwoman of the Table Bluff Reservation of the Wiyot Tribe, told the *Los Angeles Times*, "We lost our regalia, our elders, our weavers and our dreamers, all the things that

make a community. We have not danced since that day. I can't wait for that first dance."

The Wiyot had been working to get the land back for years. In 2000, the tribe raised enough money to purchase a 1.5-acre parcel on the island. The land from the city amounts to another 40 acres and is important because it contains Wiyot burial grounds and centuries-old shell middens.

One of the people instrumental in the return of the land was Jan Kraepelien, a lecturer in the Journalism and Mass Communication Department at Humboldt State University, a video-production specialist with the city of Arcata, and former director

of one of the Council's Community Heritage Projects called "Living Biographies."

Kraepelien said his experience with "Living Biographies" was pivotal in helping him understand the Wiyot world today. That project, which took place between 2000 and 2002, documented the stories of

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# AN INTERVIEW WITH AUTHOR AND POET CHITRA BANERJEE DIVAKARUNI

*This past November, Executive Director Jim Quay interviewed award-winning writer and poet Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni at a California Library Association regional meeting. Divakaruni is one of the editors of the Council's new anthology of California writings called California Uncovered: Stories for the 21st Century. The anthology, which contains stories about life in California by authors from more than a dozen ethnic back-*



CCH Executive Director Jim Quay

*grounds, will be featured in the Council's upcoming "California Stories Uncovered" campaign in April 2005. Divakaruni, the author of Mistress of Spices, The Conch Bearer and, most recently, Queen Banerjee of Dreams, talked to Quay about her work and how she sees California today. This is an excerpt from that conversation.*

**Quay:** Let me ask you a little about California. In the "Blooming Season for Cacti," a story in *The Unknown Errors of Our Lives*, you tell the story of a woman who comes to California from India. And at one point, she mentions her disappointment, her — she says — "desperate mythologizing of California." And this collision between the dream of California and its realities is a common theme in your writings. What qualities did you expect to find in California when you first got here?

**Divakaruni:** I very much remember my first trip. I had come into the airport and I was going to go to Berkeley, and a van was going to take me across the bay. And we were on the freeway and I saw these oleanders blooming. And I hadn't seen any oleanders since we'd left India. And it was so powerful and moving for me to see the flowers of my home blooming in California. I think it made me feel at home immediately and it made me love California in a very special way that I've continued to feel ever since.

**Quay:** Were there things that immediately jarred against that feeling? Because you certainly do not, either desperately or otherwise, mythologize California in your writing.

**Divakaruni:** I think that by the time I started writing about California I had begun to understand California's complexity and the wonderful opportunities. Because in all the places that I've lived in, California has been the most multicultural and the one most open to being multicultural.

And, of course, there are problems and, of course, there will be times when cultures will clash against each other. and people will respond to each other — or to the other — with fear and prejudice. But I think overall, I hope I have been able to create the sense of the very rich complexity of California.

And I notice that as I am living in Houston, it's very multicultural. But each cultural group stays very much on their own. They are by themselves. You really have to make an effort if you want to make friends with people of another culture. And when I was here in Northern California, I never had to work at that, and that's something that is very special. And I would hope that we will always foster that and keep it going because I think what we have is so special — that openness.

**Quay:** One of the reasons for the Council to publish this anthology is to enable that experience. But it's a pretty mysterious process that the reading of these words should have this powerful effect. Now I know — as a reader, as a writer, as a teacher — you have thought about this. What makes that possible? Possible for a human being to do that?

**Divakaruni:** I think that is the nature of story and the nature of books — which is that reading a book is at once a risky and yet safe kind of thing to do. You are opening yourself up to something. You don't know what, but you are doing that in a safe space. And it's also a very public and yet

intimate thing that we do when we write and read. Because here this book is going out into the world and be read by people that I don't know. And yet, as that reading is taking place, the experience of the book is this strange experience with the author on one end and the reader on the other. And while the book is being read, it is a very private and intimate experience between the author and the reader because of the story and the characters, of course. The characters are very important — they are an important part of this interchange.

And also I think it's powerful because, unlike other kinds of media, you are the ones creating those pictures. And for each one of you, the picture will be a little different. You created that private intimate world as you



Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni

read the book. And as I read the book, I am doing the same thing. So I think it is a combination of all of those things. And that when we use the imagination to create this world, and identify with it, we are really working from a very deep level within ourselves. And I think that this is a level deeper than when we watch something on a screen, where the pictures are already created for us.

So, when we come from a level that is so deep, something in us opens up and is ready for change and is ready for growth. We've made ourselves vulnerable in a sense when we are reading a book with all our attention, as we are going to allow the book to seep into us, and perhaps we won't be the same person that we were before we read that book.

**Quay:** I'm going to ask one more question. What, if anything, does it mean to be a Californian? This quote by Samuel Huntington was said about America, but I ask it about California.

"Critics say that California is a lie, because its reality falls so short of its ideals. They're wrong. California is not a lie, it is a disappointment. But it can only be a disappointment because it is a hope."

Does that make sense to you?

**Divakaruni:** Yes. I think my own experience has overall been such a positive one that I can't really say that California is a disappointment. However, I think as I've lived in California since 1979, I do see the ways that California is changing. And that sometimes is a disappointment.

Things that we loved — many of those things are passing out. Even geographically, even physically, even if we think of this Bay Area and the way it was 20 ago — it just isn't. We've lost a lot of things. And a way of thinking, especially during the dot-com boom, there was a whole new way of thinking about what was important in life. And I felt that something very important about California was passing out of our culture at that point, and a much more go-getting, financially oriented culture was coming in to take its place. So I am concerned.

**Quay:** Is there anything embodied in the anthology that for you is what's special about California?

**Divakaruni:** Well, once again, the anthology is such a wonderful collection of many, many voices from many different backgrounds — not just racial, but the urban landscape, rural landscapes, older people, younger people, people who have come from many different places and many different situations to California, the wonderful diversity. And also the idea underlying that anthology which is that all our stories are important. And if we can share all our stories, it will create a texture, a rich and cohesive texture for California. Just by sharing stories, we can do that. And I think that is one of the ideas that I really love about this.

You can read this interview in its entirety on the Council's website at [www.californiastories.org](http://www.californiastories.org).



# CCH'S NEW STATEWIDE STORY-SHARING CAMPAIGN (continued from page 1)

libraries, community centers and more, all during the month of April. Playing a leading role will be California's young people, who will document their lives, interview their neighbors, and present their view of California through websites, poetry slams and photography exhibits.

"The new campaign will provide a cornucopia of opportunities for people of all ages, economic levels and cultural backgrounds to come together to share stories and discover what we have in common despite our differences," said CCH Executive Director Jim Quay. "We are particularly excited that young people are playing such a central role in the campaign. All you have to do is look in any classroom today, and you'll see the face of California as it is becoming. Young

events. The website will also inform people how they can become involved in the campaign and provide materials for teachers, libraries and others who will be developing programs and activities.

The following are key campaign activities:

- Students in dozens of California classrooms will interview and write about people in their communities and present their work to the public during April. Students in more than 1,000 public school classrooms are expected to participate in this phase of the campaign using materials developed by CCH's partner in the undertaking, the California Writing Project, an association of 30,000 California English teachers working to improve the teaching and learning of writing. Teachers inter-

photographing their families and communities. Young people in West Hollywood, San Francisco, Riverside, Paso Robles and Santa Ana will be involved. The public will have a chance to see the finished work on websites and in public exhibits. Visitors to the CCH website can view an online exhibit of the work in January.

anthology. Among those participating are Richard Rodriguez, David Mas Masumoto, Francisco Jimenez and anthology editor Divakaruni.

- The thousands of Californians who turn to ethnic newspapers for their primary news will be invited to write a letter home describing

**"WE ARE PARTICULARLY EXCITED THAT YOUNG PEOPLE ARE PLAYING SUCH A CENTRAL ROLE IN THE CAMPAIGN. ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS LOOK IN ANY CLASSROOM TODAY, AND YOU'LL SEE THE FACE OF CALIFORNIA AS IT IS BECOMING. YOUNG PEOPLE ARE OUR FUTURE, AND I THINK IT'S IMPORTANT THAT THEIR VOICES ARE INCLUDED IN ANY CONVERSATION ABOUT CALIFORNIA."**

- Adults and young people in some 70 locations in California will participate in intergenerational programs as well as reading and discussion groups at their local libraries using a new anthology of California writing. The anthology, called *California Uncovered*, was developed especially for the campaign by CCH and Heyday Books, an independent publisher of books on California history and culture, and edited by award-winning author Chitra Divakaruni. The book contains work by such established writers as Maxine Hong Kingston, John Steinbeck and Joan Didion as well as new voices that reveal California in all its complexity, including Shirley Geok-Lin Lim, Dao Strom and Le Thi Diem Thuy.

The anthology contains a reading and discussion guide to enable people to use the book in reading groups outside of formal library programs. The anthology is available online and from local bookstores.

CCH is conducting the library program in partnership with the Califa Group, a membership-based service bureau that provides services to California libraries.

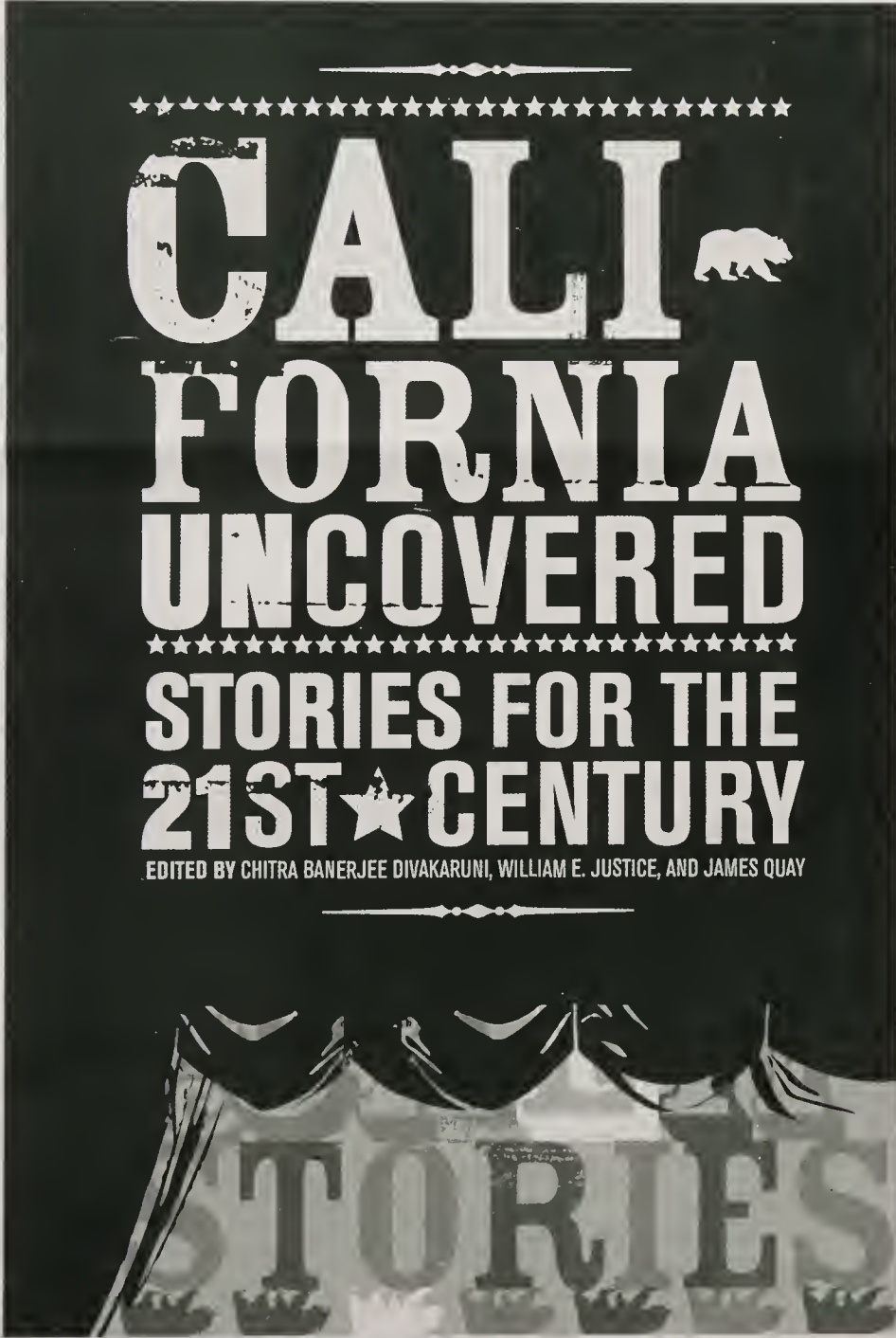
- The general public will be invited to attend writers-in-conversation events in nine hub cities: Cerritos, Chico, Fresno, Los Angeles, National City, Riverside, Sacramento, San Francisco and San Jose. These events, designed to bring people together from various aspects of the campaign, will feature CCH's Jim Quay in conversation with writers from the

their life in California. Twelve of the best letters will each be awarded \$1,000 in prize money. The letters will also be published by the respective media outlets involved in the campaign. The Council's partner in this effort is New California Media, a membership association of 700 ethnic media organizations. "This is an opportunity for Californians whose native language may not be English to share their experiences of living in California," Quay said. The deadline for submitting letters is Jan. 15.

- Public attendance and participation are encouraged for a number of other Council-sponsored events in April, including workshops, exhibits, performance pieces and community forums. All these events are connected to projects funded by the Council over the past year under the grant lines of California Stories and will be listed on the Council's website.

California Stories Uncovered is the second statewide campaign under the Council's multiyear California Stories initiative, designed to use stories to strengthen communities and inspire change. The first campaign, Reading *The Grapes of Wrath*, brought together thousands of Californians in October 2002 to read John Steinbeck's novel about California migrants and talk about their own California experiences.

For up-to-the-minute information about the campaign, visit the Council's website at [www.californiastories.org](http://www.californiastories.org).



CCH's new anthology, available this month, features work by California authors of a dozen different ethnic backgrounds.

people are our future, and I think it's important that their voices are included in any conversation about California."


A focal point of the campaign will be the Council's website ([www.californiastories.org](http://www.californiastories.org)), which will contain a searchable, up-to-the minute calendar of campaign

events. The website will also inform people how they can become involved in the campaign and provide materials for teachers, libraries and others who will be developing programs and activities.

- Immigrant and refugee youths in five communities will explore their cross-cultural identities and experiences as newcomers by



# 03



AT AGE 15 IN CAMBODIA, KONTUY DREAMED OF TEACHING DANCE. INSTEAD, KHMER ROUGE, THE GROUP RESPONSIBLE FOR KILLING NEARLY 2 MILLION CAMBODIANS IN THE MID-1970S, ORDERED HER TO WORK IN THE RICE FIELDS IN THE MOUNTAINS.

Tuy remembers stumbling out of her sleeping quarters one night to get a drink of water at a nearby creek and becoming aware of people sleeping alongside the stream bank. The next morning when she got up she realized that the people had not been asleep, but were dead, and that their blood had flowed into the stream where she had drunk the water.

Tuy's Story is part of a 2-year project called "Stockton Speaks!", in which three generations of Stockton residents — grandparents, parents and young people — share their stories. It is one of eight Communities Speak projects the Council is supporting under the California Stories Initiative.

The multicultural city of Stockton has attracted people from all over the world since the Gold Rush.





# GENERATIONS OF STOCKTONIANS SHARE COMING-OF-AGE

# STORIES

"The challenge in Stockton is how to create better understanding across all the different groups," said Bob Benedetti, director of the project, professor of political science at the University of the Pacific and executive director of the university's Jacoby Center for Community and Regional Studies, the project's fiscal sponsor. "I think that stories can show all the common themes among us."

Benedetti and the other leaders of the project decided to feature just nine ethnic groups: African American, Chinese American, Italian American, Japanese American, Filipino American, Mexican American, Cambodian American, Hmong American and Native American.

"Clearly this represents a starting point and doesn't exhaust the diversity of Stockton," he said.

Benedetti also chose to focus on one aspect of each participant's life: how a person moves from childhood to adulthood and what lessons were learned along the way. "We knew it was a topic that everyone could relate to and that it would hit a chord across generations. And we also knew that an audience listening to the stories would be reminded of their own experiences growing up," Benedetti continued.

To find families for the project, Benedetti enlisted the help of Stockton's ethnic organizations, which nominated the families to be interviewed and provided names of three leaders in their respective

communities to serve as conveners and interviewers. All the interviewers and conveners took part in a training program before being sent out to gather stories.

A typical interview team was composed of two people of different ages and ethnicities. A third person of the same ethnic background as the subject convened the family and paved the way for the interview. "What this meant,"

said Benedetti,

**"STOCKTON SPEAKS!"**

"was that we had Italian Americans interviewing Hmong Americans and Mexican Americans interviewing Chinese Americans, and so forth."

The idea, said the project's Assistant Director Gladys Ikeda, "was to open up ethnic communities to each other in the same way that the overall project hoped to do when the stories were presented to the community. We wanted to give all participants a positive experience with one another."

In all, the project collected 54 interviews from 18 families. Photos of the participants were taken by two local freelance photographers.

The organizational aspect of the project, from arranging the interviews and pairing the interviewers with the right families to accommodating conflicting schedules, was daunting, but the group was dogged in tracking everyone down and handling all the details. "It was a huge undertaking, and people

thought we were nuts," Ikeda said. "But it was a worthwhile effort because of the level of people's commitment."

Once the interviews were completed, they were handed over for editing to students in a writing class at the University of the Pacific. "It was a way to get the students involved in the community," Benedetti said.

The public had its first chance to hear "Stockton Speaks!" in August at a unique daylong, city-sponsored cultural

celebration called Hands Across Stockton.

At that event, the first nine of the 54 stories — one from each ethnic group — were presented to the assembled crowd.

Stockton Mayor Gary Podesto, who introduced the stories at the celebration, had great praise for the project and told the *Stockton Record*, "If you look back at Stockton's family histories from the very beginning, we've been an interesting and diverse community from the start."

Benedetti and his team are now working on several fronts to bring the stories to an even wider audience. They're sponsoring programs at libraries, planning to present a selection of stories at Stockton's First Night celebration on New Year's Eve and are hoping to get the stories onto the agenda of

many Stockton organizations. The next step will be to introduce the stories into Stockton's schools.

In December 2004, Benedetti sent letters, with a CD-ROM of the stories enclosed, to 150 organizations in Stockton — from the Child Abuse Prevention Council to local business groups — introducing the projects and asking for an opportunity to schedule a presentation.

"We think that these settings will help us reach more people, including those who are making social policy decisions," Benedetti said.

Benedetti and his staff will have a busy spring ahead

if all goes well. Helping out with the presentations will be seven trained discussion leaders, some of whom are former project interviewers. Members of a storytelling organization have expressed interest in participating, and students in a drama class at the University of the Pacific may become involved.

"People appreciate what we're doing" Benedetti said. "I think it's captured their imagination that someone thinks these stories are so important."

For more information on "Stockton Speaks!" and a calendar of events, visit [www.stocktonspeaks.org](http://www.stocktonspeaks.org) or e-mail Bob Benedetti at [rbenedetti@pacific.edu](mailto:rbenedetti@pacific.edu)

**AIMS TO BRIDGE CITY'S MANY CULTURES**





Eureka Mayor Peter La Vallee presents Wiyot Table Bluff Tribal Chairwoman Cheryl A. Seidner with a symbolic clay pot filled with earth from Indian Island on the day of the historic agreement returning 40 acres of the Island to the Wiyot people. City Council member Mary Beth Wolford looks on. Photo/Bob Doran

Native American elders, including the Wiyot, in the northern part of California, and turned the stories into half-hour television programs watched by thousands of Northern Californians. For some viewers it served as an introduction to Indian history and culture. The project was a component of a larger “Living Biographies” effort involving elders from a variety of backgrounds in Humboldt County — from loggers and environmentalists to timber-industry leaders.

Kraepelien credits Chag Lowry, the coordinator of “Living Biographies” who has deep roots in the Indian community, with playing a huge role in his education about the Wiyot. Before the interviewing began, Lowry, of Yurok, Maidu and Pit River ancestry, invited Kraepelien to a Wiyot community meeting at the tribe’s Table Bluff Reservation, 16 miles south of the city of Eureka. “Jan met a lot of elders and everybody clapped and was happy about what he told them about the project,” Lowry remembers, “and Jan felt so touched that the people he met were so encouraging about having him involved.”

Lowry also convinced Kraepelien that the Wiyot elders should be interviewed before those of any of the other tribes in the area. “I told him that the whole area had once been Wiyot land, and it was important that we honor that by getting Wiyot stories first,” Lowry says. Kraepelien believes that that decision was important in building the Wiyots’ trust and also in persuading the other tribes to participate in the project.

Through his ongoing relationship with Lowry and the Wiyot, Kraepelien learned about the importance of Indian Island to the Wiyot people. “They considered the island sacred, that it wasn’t like a church that could be moved somewhere else. Indian Island is their church. And it wasn’t something important just to the Wiyot, but to all the tribes.”

Lowry remembers the exact time when Kraepelien made up his mind to devote himself to the Wiyot cause. “We were driving back from interviewing a Karuk elder in Scotts Valley, and we talked about Indian Island all the way back,” Lowry remembers. “And during that ride, he said to me, ‘What do think about

my getting involved in getting Indian Island back?’ And that was it. He stuck with the cause all the way to the end.”

“Jan had done work with the Eureka City Council, so he knew people who native people didn’t know, and he knew who to approach to get things done,” Lowry says. “The idea of retuning the island had been floating around, so it was in the public consciousness, but it took someone with Jan’s energy and commitment to get things going and keep pushing.”

In July 2001, Kraepelien invited the staffs of the city of Eureka and the Wiyot tribe to a meeting at Humboldt State University to discuss the ownership of the island.

Kraepelien knew that the meeting had a great chance of going well because of the groundwork he laid beforehand, meeting separately on numerous occasions with tribal members and city officials and making a case for the return of the land. His timing couldn’t have been better. He found city officials receptive to the idea, and when Eureka City Manager Dave Tyson told him that “he completely understood that it was the right thing for the city to do,” he knew that finally the plan had a good chance of succeeding.

As Kraepelien had hoped, the meeting was an overwhelming success. The tribe and the city reached a basic agreement that the city would return 40 acres of the island to the tribe. All that remained was to work out the details. Three years later, on May 18, 2004, the Eureka City Council approved the historic resolution to return the land. “It wouldn’t have happened without Dave Tyson,” Kraepelien says. “He understood the importance to the community of giving back the land.”

Says Tribal Administrator Maura Eastman, “The night that City

Council passed the resolution was magical. I think everyone in the room had a sense of what a huge thing it was — the first time that a city in California, and maybe the country, had returned land to a tribe without getting any compensation in return. Everybody wanted to celebrate.

“I think it was just the right time, the right city council, the right climate in Humboldt County and the right people involved. And part of it was Jan’s ability to bring people and ideas together and foster communication between people of divergent interests and backgrounds. He believes strongly in the goals of the tribe and has been there every step of the way, continuing to bring the issue up and to meet with people. He never lost sight of what we wanted to accomplish. And there was nothing in it for him except his feeling that it was the right thing to do.”

“I think Jan was the right person at the right moment in history,” says Lowry. “He was able to offer his services to native people, but he let them be the leaders. And he kept the conversation going and never gave up.”

Lowry also believes that CCH’s “Living Biographies” project played an important role in persuading people of the rightness of returning the land. “Because of ‘Living Biographies,’” he said, “native people were on TV talking about their ceremonies and ancestral lands. And viewers heard about the effort to return Indian Island. It raised awareness among non-Indian people. And, maybe, they decided it wasn’t such a scary concept to give back the land. The whole project helped, and I think that having native and non-native people working together to achieve a common goal, that blessed everyone.”

## THREE JOIN BOARD OF DIRECTORS

CCH is pleased to announce three new members of the Board of Directors: Jesús Chavarria, Ben Duran and Percival Everett.

Jesús Chavarria is the founder of Hispanic Business Inc., the nation’s leading Hispanic publishing, information services, recruitment services and events company. A leader of the Hispanic small-business community, he has received numerous awards, including the Minority Business Success Award from the Institute for American

Business and the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Association of Hispanic Advertising Agencies.

Chavarria holds a doctorate in history from UCLA. He has taught at UC Santa Barbara and the University of Wisconsin and has served on the national board of the Make-A-Wish Foundation.

Ben Duran is the superintendent and president of Merced College. His background includes positions as a district school superintendent, principal, counselor and teacher. He is involved in numerous community and school-related organizations, where his efforts are directed to helping young people.

Duran holds a doctorate in educational administration from University of Southern California.

Percival Everett is professor of English at the University of Southern California and is the author of 15 books, including the novels *Erasure*, *Glyph*, *Watershed*, *God’s Country* and, most recently, *American Desert*. He is the recipient of a number of awards, including the Hurston/Wright Legacy Award, the Hillsdale Award and the PEN/Oakland Josephine Miles Award.

He holds a master’s degree from the graduate writing program at Brown University.

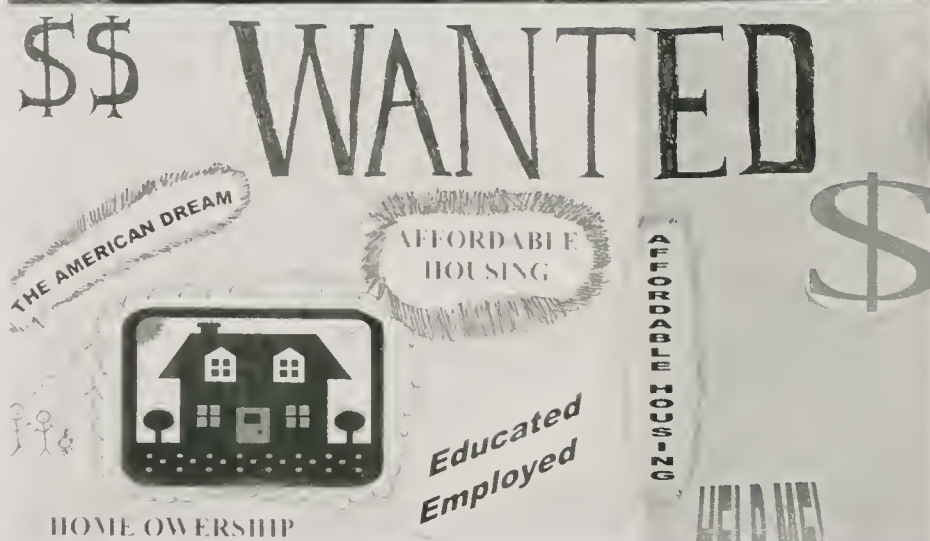
## NEW CCH STAFF MEMBER

Gary Wheelock joined the staff as executive assistant to Executive Director Jim Quay in November. Previously, Wheelock was at the Hispanic Community Foundation in San Francisco and before that worked in New York at Elias Arts, a music media company.

Wheelock has traveled extensively in Europe, South America and Asia, and is planning to visit Japan next spring. He holds a bachelor’s degree in philosophy from City College of the City University of New York.



# RADIO DOCUMENTARY EXPLORES THE CAUSES, EFFECTS AND POSSIBLE CURES OF THE CENTRAL COAST'S HOUSING CRISIS



In a search for an affordable place to live in Santa Cruz County, Juan Mendoza, the head of a local youth center, resorted to standing in front of a shopping center carrying a "house-wanted" sign. Photo/Rachel Goodman

The Central Coast of California appears to have it all, from redwood forests and scenic beaches to a mild climate and some of the most productive agricultural land in the nation. But making a home in such a paradise is not easy these days as home prices far outstrip incomes, making it nearly impossible for local workers, including teachers, firefighters and nurses, to find places of their own.

Award-winning radio producer Rachel Anne Goodman documents the Central Coast's housing crisis in her one-hour radio special funded by the Council under the California Documentary Project. Called "Boomtown Chronicles: Reflections on a Changing California," the program will air on NPR and community stations this spring.

Goodman, a native Californian who has lived in Santa Cruz County in the northern part of the Central Coast most of her life, became interested in the problem as she saw the crisis taking a toll in her own community. "The median price of houses in Santa Cruz County, where I live, is now \$659,000. The prices are up there with Paris and London, and they are driving a lot of people out. But despite this, people still keep coming here because it's so beautiful. It's not just about the housing

crisis. It's how growth changes a community."

Goodman talked to a cross-section of people for the piece, including a longtime rancher with hundreds of acres of strawberries and lettuce in production, farmworkers forced to live in overcrowded, substandard conditions and local residents being "gentrified" out of their neighborhoods.

One of the people she interviewed was house hunter Juan Mendoza, the head of a local youth center who moved to the area two years ago. Mendoza and his social worker wife qualified for a \$450,000 mortgage but have had no luck finding a home. On the day Goodman catches up with him he is standing on a busy street outside a shopping center carrying a "house wanted" sign, hoping that passersby might give him leads to housing he can afford.

"We're all set to go," he tells Goodman, "but when it comes down to it, can an average person afford a mortgage payment of \$3,000 a month? It leaves no disposable income whatsoever. A person just ends up scratching by. It doesn't make a lot of sense. And I'm just one person. There are hundreds, thousands of Californians trying to find an affordable house. Just a home to live in, that's all I'm asking."

"Juan was the first person in his family to get an education, and he wants to settle here, but he may not be able to afford to," Goodman says. "It will be disappointing for him and a loss for the youth center."

Goodman points out that Mendoza is competing with affluent people from Silicon Valley who come to the area seeking cheaper housing. "It's a ripple effect," she says. "People from Silicon Valley outbid the local people for homes, so the locals are forced to move further away from the coast — and then they buy a place inland, forcing out the locals there. People end up living a long way from where they work."

For farmworkers, whose average income is \$1,200 a month, moving out is not an option. Typically they double or triple up in rooms and often become victims of rent gauging.

John Doughty, head of Watsonville's Redevelopment Agency, tells Goodman about one case in which people paid \$250 a month to park their car in someone's driveway and another where

labor camps into affordable housing and to Anna Caballero, the mayor of Salinas, who is drafting an innovative plan that combines a mix of subsidies and laws requiring builders to create affordable housing.

Most agree that cities will have to work together to solve the crisis. Mayor Caballero tells Goodman, "The closer you get to the coast, the more expensive the housing gets. If we're not careful, the houses on the coast will be second homes, and, as a result, those communities will get whiter and more exclusive and lose the children necessary to fill the schools. There's this political divide between the communities housing the workforce and the wealthier communities on the coast. In Salinas, we continue building affordable housing because we think there's a moral imperative to do so. The challenge is to get coastal communities to see they have a moral imperative as well."

Goodman hopes that her documentary will help move the issue of affordable housing back onto the agenda. "I think the piece



Farmworkers pay \$350 a month to park travel trailers in the Golden Torch Trailer Camp in Freedom, Calif., in Santa Cruz County. Photo/Rachel Goodman

45 people paid a landlord \$8,400 a month to live in a two-bedroom house.

Among the farmworkers Goodman interviews is 25-year-old Alejandro Castillo, who's been living with his parents and grandparents in a small travel trailer in a labor camp for three years. The trailers, typically designed to hold two people, often house families of ten. Castillo tells Goodman about the conditions. "A lot of the trailers have plastic tarps on them to keep the water out when it rains," he says. "Inside many are run down and rusted out."

Despite the bleakness of the housing picture, Goodman finds glimmers of hope. She talks to people at several nonprofit groups involved in turning condemned

highlights the desire of residents not to have this area become another L.A.," she says. "I hope it inspires them to feel a sense of concern, not only about the housing crisis but also about where we're going as a state, and to become involved in the planning process in their communities."

For more information about "Boomtown Chronicles," visit [www.coastridge.org](http://www.coastridge.org) or e-mail Rachel Goodman at [Rachel@well.com](mailto:Rachel@well.com).



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The mission of the California Council for the Humanities is to enrich California’s cultural life and to strengthen communities through public use of the humanities.

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